

PHILOSOPHIES ANCIENT AND MODERN

LOCKE

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# LOCKE

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ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE & CO LTD

1908

## PREFATORY NOTE

I DESIRE to acknowledge my obligations to Prof. Campbell Fraser's books on Locke (especially the introduction to his edition of the *Essay*), and to Mr. H. R. Fox Bourne's very valuable *Life of John Locke* (London, 1876). In the concluding chapters I have derived help from Sidgwick's *History of Ethics*, Stephen's *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, and Prof Ch. Bastide's *John Locke: ses théories politiques* (Paris, 1906). I am indebted to Prof. G. F. Stout for several useful suggestions.

S. A.

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# LOCKE

## CHAPTER I

### LIFE

LOCKE's life is one of those, not rare in the history of English letters and science, in which the scholar is doubled with the man of the world and of public affairs. His instinct for speculation and his delicate health marked him out for a life of academic retirement; his talent for business and his practical capacity secured him weight in politics, and put within his reach, had he chosen to accept them, important state employments. He combined scholarly seclusion with public influence. In his latest years he held for a time high office as a commissioner of trade; and all his life he was in the background of politics, the trusted adviser of Shaftesbury, of the party who aimed at the establishment of William of Orange, and finally, of Somers and Charles Montague. Though he was always known as a man of eminent parts, his fame as a writer was confined to his last

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fifteen years. He himself chose as his profession the more active work of medicine, though he practised it only for a few years in Shaftesbury's family, and occasionally afterwards. His life was in fact that of a *savant*, who lived in close relation to the men of science of his time, such as Boyle, Sydenham, and Newton, and who, like Lord Acton in our own day, was at the same time the confidential friend of statesmen. It cannot be doubted that his intellectual and practical interests acted and reacted upon each other. Though not himself the author of great public measures, he took his share in many and he voiced the principles of liberty which inspired them. On the other hand, the devotion to truth which compels him to see things for himself, as they are, within the limits of his vision, is accompanied in him by a native sagacity and caution, an insight, perhaps acquired in affairs, into the character of men, and a sympathy with the needs of the plain average man, which fitted him to be the exponent of a new method of thinking and to set the tone of thought to the century which succeeded him. More than in the case of most philosophers, Locke's history is varied with incident and involved with the history of the anxious and seminal time in which he lived.

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He was born at Wrington, a village in Somersetshire, on the 29th of August 1632. His father, John Locke, was Clerk to the Justices of the Peace, one of whom—Alexander Popham—took command of a volunteer regiment of horse raised in the parliamentary cause in 1642. The elder Locke took up arms under him as a captain. He suffered heavily in property by the Civil War. Of his mother the younger John Locke expressed himself in affectionate terms. His father educated him with great care, treating him with rigour as a child, but admitting him to friendship as he grew up,—a practice which Locke approves. A letter to his father is preserved which testifies to the tenderness Locke felt for him. Early years are impressionable, and Locke writes in 1661, ‘I no sooner perceived myself in the world, but I found myself in a storm which has lasted almost hitherto.’ By Popham’s offices he was sent, probably in 1646, to Westminster School, then under the government of the famous Dr. Richard Busby, and was there put through an incessant drilling in Greek and Latin, which may have made Locke the good scholar he was, but may also explain the depreciation which he afterwards, in his *Thoughts upon Education*, expressed for such exercises. From Westminster he proceeded in 1652, as a



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junior student, to Christchurch, Oxford, the Dean of which was then Dr. John Owen, appointed by Cromwell. Owen was also Vice-Chancellor of the University, and he and his Puritan colleagues worked with a will towards redeeming the University from the idleness and contempt of learning into which it had fallen. Owen proclaimed and taught the doctrine of toleration—a fact not to be forgotten in the life of the future author of the *Letters concerning Toleration*. Locke did not relish the studies of the place, and regretted that his father had sent him to Oxford. He disliked the public disputations in the schools, which he thought ‘invented for wrangling and ostentation, rather than to discover truth.’ He regarded his early years at Oxford as wasted, because the only philosophy then known there ‘was the peripatetic, perplexed with obscure terms and useless questions.’ He spent, we hear, a good part of his first years in the University in reading romances. But he attended the lectures of the mathematicians Wallis and Ward, and was intimate with Pocock, the professor of Arabic. It was, however, the study of Descartes which first ‘gave him a relish of philosophical things. He was rejoiced in reading them, because, though he very often differed in opinion from this writer, he yet found that

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what he said was very intelligible, from whence he was encouraged to think that his not having understood others had possibly not proceeded from a defect in his understanding.' It is not easy to make out the sources of Locke's philosophical thought—except Descartes, and the *Port Royal Logic*. Bacon he knew, and also Hobbes (though, he says, not intimately), and he appears to have been influenced by the atomism of Gassendi. Leibniz he knew little, and expressed in later life a low opinion of him.<sup>1</sup> Malebranche he studied and criticised. But we can well believe his own statement that he learned more from intercourse with men than from books.

Locke became a senior student of Christchurch in 1659, and the emoluments of that office were, with a small property inherited from his father of about £70 a year, his main source of income till 1684, when he was deprived of his studentship. Even when he lived in London, he paid frequent and long visits to Oxford. After the Restoration, a new order of things arose in the University, which Locke welcomed. His bringing up as a Puritan, combined with his disappointment with

<sup>1</sup> The *Nouveaux Essais*, in which Leibniz expounded and reviewed the *Essay*, Locke never saw, and indeed, owing to Locke's death, it was not published in Leibniz's lifetime.

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the Puritan rule, may have fostered the bent of his mind towards latitudinarian views of theology, and towards dislike of extreme fanaticism or 'enthusiasm.' He was appointed to lectureships at Christchurch usually held by clergymen. His father had designed him for the ministry. But Locke declined a tempting offer leading to preferment in the Irish Church, not desiring to commit himself to a profession which he could not divest himself of, supposing that he failed in it. Finally, he decided upon the profession of medicine. He had for some years pursued the study of physical science, and had consorted with Boyle and the other members of the Oxford branch of the Royal Society. Boyle's *History of the Air*, which Locke edited after Boyle's death, contains observations registered by Locke from 1660 to 1667. He never obtained the doctorate in medicine, and there was some difficulty in securing for him the degree of Bachelor, because he had not attended the regular courses of lectures in medicine. He began practice at Oxford, as an amateur partner of his friend Dr. Thomas.

In 1665 Locke obtained, in a way which is not clear, the appointment of secretary to Sir Walter Vane, who went to Clèves on a special embassy to the Elector of Brandenburg. Letters to his friend

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John Strachey describe with somewhat heavy humour the incidents of his stay there. Locke must have shown his abilities, for, on his return, he was offered an appointment in an embassy to Spain. Though he was plainly much tempted, his good genius saved him from diplomacy for philosophy, and he remained at Oxford practising medicine.

It was in 1667 that, by an accident arising out of his profession, he became acquainted with Shaftesbury—an event which determined his future life. Shaftesbury (then Lord Ashley) came to Oxford, to drink the waters of the village of Astrop, not far off, which were then much recommended. Owing to some delay in the supply of the waters, Locke, in the absence of Dr. Thomas, waited upon Ashley to explain. The impression the two men left upon each other was such as to lead to a lasting friendship. Locke went to London in 1667 at Ashley's invitation, and thenceforth became a member of Ashley's household. He acted as physician to the household, though he also practised to some extent outside. Ashley himself owed his life to an operation performed by Locke. But he was not only the doctor, but was intrusted with intimate private affairs of the family, arranging the marriage of Ashley's son, and becoming thereafter tutor of the little boy who was to be the

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Shaftesbury of the *Characteristics* and to disown the philosophy of his tutor. More important still, he became Ashley's confidential adviser, though it is not necessary to suppose him privy to all the statesman's political actions. He helped in drawing up in 1663 the Fundamental Constitutions for the government of Carolina, of which settlement Ashley was one of the proprietors. A draft of the scheme exists in Locke's handwriting, and whether this scheme is due to him wholly or only in part, its liberal provisions for freedom of religion, if only belief in God is avowed, are in keeping with Locke's opinions. When Shaftesbury became Chancellor in 1672, Locke became secretary of presentations (to benefices), and later, secretary of the recently established Council of Trade and Foreign Plantations (or Colonies), an office which he retained till the Council was dissolved in 1675, though he does not appear to have received the salary due to him. While he was thus occupied in practical affairs, he still carried on his work in medicine, and was allied in friendship with Sydenham, who commends him in no measured terms in the preface to the third edition of his *Method of curing Fevers* (1676). In 1668, he became a Fellow of the Royal Society. Though he was more than once a member of Council, he

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does not, however, seem to have taken any active part in its proceedings. But about this time in a small circle of friends there occurred the famous meeting from which the *Essay* took its origin 'Five or six friends,' he says, 'meeting at my chamber, and discoursing on a subject very remote from this, found themselves quickly at a stand by the difficulties that rose on every side. After we had awhile puzzled ourselves without coming nearer resolution of those doubts which perplexed us, it came into my thoughts that we took a wrong course, and that before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understandings were or were not fitted to deal with. This I proposed to the company, who all readily assented, and thereupon it was agreed that this should be our first inquiry. Some hasty and undigested thoughts, on a subject I had never before considered, which I set down against our next meeting gave the first entrance into this discourse.' We know the names of two of his friends, Tyrrell and Thomas, and that the discourse was about the principles of worship and revealed religion. A short paragraph dated 1671 of his common-place book has been preserved, which marks the beginning of Locke's work.

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Relieved of his office in 1675, Locke spent the next four years in rest and travel in France. His chest always was weak, and from this time forward he had constantly to struggle against asthma, for which the smoke-laden air of London in the winter was peculiarly unfavourable. We possess journals of his sojourn in France, which enable us to follow his movements and the observations he made there (*eg* his report on the vineyards made for Shaftesbury). Most of his time was spent at Montpellier, the great medical school, and Locke describes the initiation of a young doctor there, in terms which recall the famous passage of Molière's *Malade Imaginaire*. Some considerable time he also spent in Paris, in the society of learned friends. But he returned in 1679 to serve again as adviser to Shaftesbury during the troubled years of the Exclusion Bill and the Whig Plots, in which his movements can only obscurely be traced. Shaftesbury was obliged to escape to Holland in 1681, where he died the next year, and Locke, whose political associations brought him into suspicion, thought it prudent to leave England for Holland in 1683, and there he remained till after the Revolution, returning in 1689.

In Holland he made many friends, one of them in particular Van Limborch, the head of the Re-

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monstrant (or Arminian) College, to whom he addressed the *Epistola de Tolerantia* in its Latin form. After some travelling he settled at Utrecht in 1684, where he learned that Charles II. had compelled Fell, the Dean of Christchurch, to deprive him of his Studentship as having behaved 'factiously and undutifully to the Government.' He was left now for his support to his small private property and the annuity of £100 which Shaftesbury had provided for him. Not long after, his name was attached to a list of persons whom James II. requested the Dutch Government to hand over on suspicion of being implicated in Monmouth's insurrection, from which Locke had carefully held himself aloof. Locke remained in hiding for some time at Amsterdam and afterwards settled at Clèves under an assumed name. The danger was probably not so great as he feared—the Dutch Government would probably not have surrendered him. His friend Pembroke secured him James's pardon and begged him to return. Locke proudly declined the pardon as having been guilty of no crime. But the danger was past, and he was free to consult his own desire for leisure for study and removed to Rotterdam, where he lived in the house of a Quaker friend, Furly, and was in close association with the



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English exiles, more particularly Mordaunt, afterwards Peterborough, and it appears even with William of Orange himself. He followed William to England in 1689.

With his return to London Locke's appearance as an author begins in England. In 1690 appeared both the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* and the *Two Treatises of Government*, the latter work anonymously. The *Letter concerning Toleration* had appeared in its Latin form (*Epistola de Tolerantia*) in 1685, but the English translation (by William Popple) appeared in London in 1689. This was also anonymous, and great was Locke's anger when he discovered subsequently that his friend Limborch had divulged his authorship, even to an intimate friend. It was never acknowledged by him except in his will. Locke is thus one of the great writers whose writings have appeared in advanced age, for in 1689 he was fifty-seven. But the entries in his common-place books and journals show that the *Essay* was in preparation ever since 1671, and had, as he said, been the subject of interrupted labours during his travels in France. There is evidence that a draft of it was seen by Shaftesbury before 1683, but it was finally prepared during his exile in Holland, where he had already published an

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abstract of it in his friend Leclerc's *Bibliographie Universelle* in 1689. Nothing is more interesting than to trace the preparation in Locke's mind for his authentic deliverances, and the papers preserved to us show rather how early than how late the central ideas of his various doctrines took shape. Of particular interest are writings which the industry of Mr. Fox Bourne has discovered among the Shaftesbury papers, written by Locke at various times and bearing specially on his views of religious liberty. One of these dates from 1660: 'Whether the civil magistrate may lawfully impose and determine the use of indifferent things in reference to religious worship', which shows Locke's impatience of the intolerance shown by the Puritans, and the hopes, doomed to disappointment, which he derived from the accession of Charles II. Another is a paper of 'Reflections on the Roman Commonwealth' (written before 1667), in which Numa is praised for his moderation in what he regarded as the requirements of religion. A still more important 'Essay concerning Toleration (1667)' published in full by Mr. Fox Bourne anticipates almost completely the *Letter*. It exhibits the same desire towards non-interference of the civil power with religion, exposing also the folly of such interference; the same desire for

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a comprehensive religion which should unite all sects in one national church; the same exception from toleration of atheists and also of sects like the Catholic in so far as they set up another temporal authority against the civil authority of the land. The main outlines of Locke's famous *Letter* have become part and parcel of our ordinary political thinking, and this diminishes our interest in it and perhaps leads us to forget the audacity and originality, which, though the *Letter* had precedents in previous writers in England and in the practice of Holland, we must still acknowledge in it, and which gave it its influence over the mind of Europe. All the more value attaches to the earlier writings which enable us to detect the existence of these doctrines in the history of Locke's own mind.

Locke's years from 1690 to 1704, or at least from 1691, were spent in semi-retirement in Essex, varied by public business in London. He held office under the Crown as Commissioner of Appeals for eleven or twelve years, and in the more important office of a Commissioner of Trade from 1695, in which office he received a salary of £1000. He accepted this last office only under pressure. He appears to have been in fact the chief member of the Board, and projected im-

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portant work in promotion of Irish linen manufacture and of reform of the poor laws, though his proposals in these respects were not put into effect. His inability to bear the London winter led to an early resignation which Somers pressed him to reconsider, but he finally withdrew from office in 1700. His influence was, however, not confined to his official work. In the early years of William's reign, letters from Somers show how much value was set upon his advice. One incident of peculiar interest occurred in 1689, when he was offered the post of ambassador to Frederick I. the Elector of Brandenburg. Again his good genius persuaded him to decline, on the pretext of his weak health, the cold climate, and his inability to support the 'warm drinking' necessary in those parts for one who was to make himself acceptable. And though he was invited to go to Vienna instead, Locke persisted in his refusal. William showed the value he set upon Locke's services by summoning him urgently at a later date from Essex in the winter, for some purpose not sufficiently made out, but probably again of a diplomatic character; but the summons cost Locke several days of severe illness. During these later years Locke concerned himself largely with economic questions. In 1692, he published

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anonymously some letters (addressed, Mr. Fox Bourne thinks, to Somers) on 'The consequences of the lowering of interest and raising the value of money' which had reference to a proposal that had been made to lower the rate of interest by law, and to the serious problem of the depreciation of the currency which caused Locke great anxiety. When Lowndes, the Secretary to the Treasury, made a proposal in 1695 for raising the value of money, Locke returned to the subject and rendered service to Somers and Montague, who had consulted him, in their legislation for reform of the coinage. In this year also some strictures which Locke had written on the Licensing Act (which maintained the censorship of the press) were read in a conference of the two Houses, and helped towards the demolition of the Act.

Locke's country residence was at Oates, in Essex, where he finally took up his abode in 1691, in the house of Sir Francis Masham, as soon as he could persuade that gentleman, at whose house Locke had frequently been a visitor, to accept him as a permanent guest upon suitable terms. Masham's wife was the daughter of Cudworth the Cambridge Platonist, with whose family Locke had long been on terms of friendship. Lady Masham devoted herself with unfailing affection to her friend,

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whose declining years and fragile health she cheered with her intellectual companionship. Her letter to Leclerc, written after Locke's death, is a principal source of our knowledge of his life. Masham's daughter Esther (his child by a former wife) became a great friend of Locke, and a lively correspondence passed when either was away from home between 'Laudabridis' and 'Joannes.' While at Oates, Locke carried on the greater part of the immense literary work of his later life. The details may be mentioned briefly. A second letter concerning Toleration had appeared in 1690, in answer to a criticism of the first by Jonas Proast, and the long third letter published in 1692, was a rejoinder to Proast's rejoinder. In 1693 Locke published his *Thoughts concerning Education*, containing the substance of letters written from Holland to his friend Clarke about the education of Clarke's son. Locke used his medical knowledge with much effect in the earlier part of his treatise. The general body of the work reveals his sagacious care for the growth of character, and his aversion to studies calculated to cultivate address, rather than progress in knowledge. In all the methods of education, he looked to their effect upon the pupil's mind. But he put virtue and practical wisdom first and learning

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last.<sup>1</sup> Probably Locke under-rates the value of learning as itself a means of educating character—the topic on which it was reserved for Herbart to insist. But his work deserves its place in educational literature for its wisdom and sense of life, and it has the historical importance of having affected the *Emile* of Rousseau. Locke was engaged continually in modifying the *Essay*, of which a second edition appeared in 1694, and a much amended fourth edition in 1700. In 1695, he published anonymously his *Reasonableness of Christianity* (followed by two ‘Vindications’ of it). Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester, recognised in the writer of this work the author of the *Essay*, and when Toland, the deistical writer, published next year his *Christianity not Mystrious*, which he professed to found upon Locke’s *Essay*, attacked the *Essay* itself by way of a defence of the Trinity against Toland and the Unitarians. Locke replied to Stillingfleet’s attacks in a series of letters, between 1697 and

<sup>1</sup> R. H. Quick (*Educational Reformers*), observes that this work should be read in connection with the *Conduct of the Understanding*, where instead of considering subjects of study from the point of view of their usefulness for a young gentleman (as in the *Thoughts*), Locke considers them as means of training, and urges that the value of study is to enable the youth to use his reason for himself hereafter.

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1699, which supplemented in certain respects the doctrine of the *Essay*, and overwhelmed his opponent with argument and irony. Of Locke's posthumous writings the most important philosophically are a paper on Malebranche and *The Conduct of the Understanding*.

Many friends came to see Locke during his retirement at Oates, or received visits from him. Among these was Newton, between whom and Locke there subsisted a real affection. Locke took some part in securing for Newton his appointment at the Mint. But Newton was not always easy to deal with. Once, in consequence of prolonged insomnia (due to dozing by the fire in his room), he imagined a grievance against Locke. A reader who remembers the greatness of the two men will find something very touching in the letter in which Newton contritely asks forgiveness for entertaining and expressing an evil opinion of his friend, and in Locke's reply of surprise and generous affection. Another friend of this later time, whom the *Essay* brought him, was William Molyneux, 'the ingenious gentleman' of the *Essay* 'whom I am proud to call my friend,' an Irish patriot before Swift, who introduced the *Essay* into Trinity College, Dublin, where it was to be read shortly by the young



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Berkeley, and has ever since remained a textbook. Molyneux' discussion of the *Essay* helped Locke to several amendments, and he visited Locke at Oates. Another new friend was Anthony Collins, a young neighbouring squire, who afterwards wrote one of the best known of the deistical writings. Locke took a warm interest in a relation of his, Peter King, a young lawyer and member of Parliament, who became his sole executor. It was King's descendant, Lord Chancellor King, who published in 1829 the *Life of John Locke*. Still another young friend deserves mention, Pierre Coste, French tutor to the boy Francis Masham, who wrote of Locke in Bayle's magazine *Les Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*. Locke died on the 28th of October 1704, and was buried in the churchyard at High Laver, the parish where he used to attend service.

Locke's capacity of friendship, which included love of children and young people, is apparent from his whole history. Lady Masham and Coste have left us a charming and amiable picture of his personality—'his singular humanity and good breeding, which made him alike conversible with all sorts of people,' and made him lead people to talk of what they understood best; his fondness of raillery and banter, 'though rarely if ever, to

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the least offence of any person, but rather to dwell on some very slight fault, or else that which was usually commendable and for their honour to be known'; his wit in conversation; his kindness and charity, which, however, were always directed to encourage industry. 'He was a great lover of economy, and an exact keeper of accounts' and he was very neat in his dress and habits, without any affectation or singularity. He was quick-tempered and sometimes against unfair assailants he did not conceal his anger, but he was easily appeased. When some one quoted in his hearing some words of Horace, 'Ah,' said Locke, 'I am like Horace in both these things. I love the warmth of the sun, and though I am prone to be angry, my hot temper soon goes down.'

If we had not his letters and the testimony of these friends, we could easily guess from the style of his writing and particularly of the *Essay* what manner of man he was. It suggests a man sagacious, cautious, skilled in the knowledge of men and regardful above all things of what it concerns man's happiness to know and to be, a foe to 'enthusiasm,' but of broad spirit and sympathy. He writes leisurely, as if he were talking out of a full mind; determined to see things clearly; anxious to make his meaning plain, yet not over-care-

ful of precision, but content, as a man of the world, to allow one part of his discourse to supply the qualification of another part. Prolix his style is, exceeding the measure of our less spacious times, and when it is controversial, protracted into tediousness. Its uniform level is diversified here and there by phrases of striking and even pungent wit ('God when he makes the prophet doth not unmake the man'), more often by quiet humour ('every drowsy nod shakes their doctrine who teach that the soul is always thinking') or irony, which is always courteous (and therefore more effective) except when it is directed against an unworthy criticism. It betrays little imagination, though occasionally there is a touch of tenderness and fancy as in the passage: 'The ideas as well as children of our youth often die before us; and our minds represent those tombs to which we are approaching; where though the brass and marble remain, yet the inscriptions are effaced by time and the imagery moulders away'; or when he allows himself to consider the possibility of continuous grades of spirits in the world, though there the imagination belongs rather to the thought than to the style. Often there are passages of sustained eloquence like the concluding pages of the *Reasonableness of Christianity*. But

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its general tone is that of equable common-sense, without emphasis, without enthusiasm, restrained in its judgment, careful of measure, never dull but reflecting evenly from a candid surface, modest when it is most original, because concerned with the faithful presentment of things, rather lambent than fiery, an inspired pedestrianism.

## CHAPTER II

### PHILOSOPHY—(THE *ESSAY*)

NOTHING enables us so well to understand the meaning of a philosophic writer as to know the spirit in which he undertook his inquiries, and it is fortunate for us that the more personal and autobiographical method of writers like Descartes, Locke, and Spinoza (in one of his treatises) and others, admits us into this secret. Locke's spirit is that of criticism. The method of criticism in philosophy is principally associated with the name of Kant, who avowed and described it. It is the method of determining the limits of our knowledge by an inquiry into the instrument. In this sense Locke has been rightly described as 'the first critical philosopher,' and different as his procedure was from Kant's, and different as was the outcome of their thinking, their affinity of spirit is profounder than their divergence. The words in which Locke describes, at the opening of the *Essay*, the occasion of his writing it remind us of the later words of Kant in his preface to the

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*Critique of Pure Reason.* ‘I thought,’ Locke says, ‘that the first step towards satisfying several inquiries the mind of man was very apt to run into, was to take a survey of our own understandings, examine our own powers, and see to what things they were adapted. Till that was done I suspected we began at the wrong end and in vain sought for satisfaction in a quiet and sure possession of truths that most concerned us, whilst we let loose our thoughts into the vast ocean of being; as if all that boundless extent were the natural and undoubted possession of our understandings, wherein there was nothing exempt from its decision, or that escaped its comprehension. Thus men extending their inquiries beyond their capacities, and letting their thoughts wander into those depths where they can find no sure footing, it is no wonder that they raise questions and multiply disputes, which, never coming to any clear resolution, are proper only to continue and increase their doubts, and confirm them at last in perfect scepticism. Whereas were the capacities of our understandings well considered, the extent of our knowledge once discovered and the horizon found which sets the bounds between the enlightened and dark parts of things—between what is and what is not comprehensible by us—men would

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perhaps with less scruple acquiesce in the avowed ignorance of the one, and employ their thoughts and discourse with more advantage and satisfaction in the other.' With Locke the speculative impulse is an out-growth from practical needs. 'Our business here is not to know all things but those which concern our conduct.' He is persuaded that for two evils to which the mind is liable: scepticism which bids us doubt everything because there are some things which cannot be understood, and on the other hand extravagant pretensions to knowledge - there is but one cure, to know how much we can know. The *Essay* is thus a doctrine of the limits of knowledge.

All its multifarious inquiries converge to this end. The extent of knowledge is indeed the proper subject of only one book, the fourth and last. Knowledge is to Locke the perception of the agreement or disagreement of our ideas, that is to say, of the objects of our understanding. A preliminary survey was therefore necessary of these ideas, and because to him words, the signs of ideas, were an index to the nature of ideas themselves, and the misuse of language was partly provoked by unclearness in our ideas, and partly provoked it, the study of ideas and the study of words are conjoined. These inquiries occupy the

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major part of the *Essay* in Books II. and III. It is a method Locke describes as the 'plain, historical method.' But history means to him not simply or primarily the record of the origin and growth of our ideas, but rather it has the sense in which Bacon and Aristotle used the word before him, and in which we still speak of Zoology as natural history. The history of our minds means a description of the contents of our mind as we find them, arranging them into sorts, and assigning them to their appropriate faculties. The second book of Locke's *Essay*, which is a survey of ideas, is in fact an inventory of our experience. But Locke does not distinguish the inquiry into the contents of our ideas from the inquiry into their origin, and hence arises one of the chief defects of the *Essay*. For in analysing our ideas into their simplest elements, which is his principal object, he implies and even says, that these simple elements exist first and that the more complex ones are constructed out of them. But the 'history' which may be true as a description and an analysis is not necessarily true as an account of the order of growth.

Locke's method has sometimes been described as psychological, and it has been made a charge against him as well as against his successors,



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Berkeley and Hume, that they give us psychology instead of philosophy. This charge is founded upon a misunderstanding of the spirit of their work. While they are founders of English psychology, their primary interest is philosophical or metaphysical, and they are only incidentally psychologists. The object of psychology is to describe the process by which the mind acquires its experiences. Necessarily such a classification as Locke gives of these experiences, referring them to the mental capacities by which we acquire them, supplies at the same time the material of a psychology. But Locke's object is to describe the different kinds of objects the mind thinks about, and in fact the processes of observation, perception, willing and the like, which are the subject-matter of psychology (a word which Locke himself does not employ), are for him merely one portion of the contents of human experience, that which he describes as ideas of reflection.

By 'idea' (a term which he borrows from Descartes) Locke means 'whatever is the object of the understanding, when a man thinks' or 'whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking.' It includes thus the simplest experiences like heat, and the most complex like

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those of civilisation or mathematical relations; and not merely experience of things, but of events, whether in the external world, or, like the process of conceiving, in the mind itself; not only ideas of particular things but general or abstract ideas. Careless as Locke's use of language is, there is never any doubt as to his use of this word. Sometimes he describes an idea by reference to the capacity which supplies it—an idea of sensation is thus an idea supplied by sense; sometimes by reference to its contents, as when he speaks of an idea of heat, in other words heat so far as it is experienced. They are objects of mind: they would not be what they are if they were not experienced; but they are objects still. They are in fact the appearances of things, in so far as these appearances are presented to the mind, or as Locke and his followers more often say 'are in the mind'. But he does not answer, because he does not raise, the question as to what the nature of these ideas is or how they arise. He is content to say that when a hot thing excites the skin and the movement is continued to the brain, it produces in the mind the idea of heat—in this case an idea of sensation or perception. He assumes that there is an external thing, and a mind, and that upon suitable occasion the mind apprehends

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an idea related to the thing. But while these ideas are for Locke appearances of things, they cannot be described as being identical with things in so far as the things appear to us under different aspects. The ideas are not attributes of the things themselves, they are to Locke copies of the things to which they refer. Locke insists that we can only know reality through ideas which are its copies, that ideas or their relations are the proper objects of mind, and in fact his whole effort is to determine just how much, in extent and in kind, these ideas can tell us of the real world which he assumes. The world of ideas constitutes therefore (to neglect certain qualifications to be mentioned hereafter) a body of representations of real things.

But while he thus assumes that the objects of mind are themselves mental in character Locke never describes them in the modern phrase of 'states of consciousness.' He never says (and does not believe) that we know nothing but our own states. He does indeed constantly speak of ideas as being 'in the mind,' and it is easy to find passages which suggest that the ideas are mental affections. 'The pictures drawn in our minds,' he says, 'of the ideas of memory' (what we should now call the images of memory) 'are laid in fading colours, and if not sometimes refreshed, vanish

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and disappear' But it is clear that an idea of perception, *e.g.* the idea of a tree is not an affection of the mind in the same sense as the act of perception itself is. Nor does Locke, who maintains that mathematical ideas have a reality of their own, mean that a triangle is a mere affection of the mind which vanishes when we cease to think of it. Locke does not in the *Essay* raise the problem which is involved in this phrase affection or modification of mind—a problem which agitated the followers of Descartes, and when he meets it in his posthumous treatise on Malebranche he is impatient of it and pushes it aside. To have the modification of mind involved in seeing the purple colour of a violet (Malebranche called this sensation a 'sentiment' in distinction from the idea), is the same thing as 'to have the idea of purple in my mind.' To Locke what is important is that 'when we think of a colour or a figure which we did not think of before there is some alteration in the mind.' But how we come to have ideas he cannot explain. 'I see or perceive or have ideas when it pleases God that I should, but in a way that I cannot comprehend.' The phrase, that ideas are in the mind, cannot therefore be pressed—it might be replaced by the phrase, ideas are before the mind. The word 'idea,'

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therefore, contains for Locke no theory; it means simply an object of the understanding when we think. Unfortunately he also did not inquire what was involved in assigning to ideas a twilight existence between the things they represent and the mind which understands them. That he did not do so is a philosophical defect, but if we are to apprehend his meaning, we must beware of importing into his philosophy doctrines that he does not maintain.

Let us follow Locke in his inventory of ideas. They may be distinguished, in the first place, according to their 'original.' All our ideas, all the materials of our thought and knowledge, are derived directly or indirectly from experience, and from two sources of it, sensation and reflection. External sensible objects supply us with the one set of ideas, ideas of sensation, our own operations about the ideas got by sensation, when the mind comes to reflect upon these operations, supply us with the other set, the ideas of reflection: such ideas as the acts of perceiving, willing, thinking, feeling. Apart from experience, then, directly or indirectly received, the mind is to Locke a white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas, a *tabula rasa*; or it is compared to a dark cabinet into which the senses let in light.

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That we have no innate ideas, no objects of experience not derived from these two sources, is the implied doctrine, the subject-matter of Book I., whose significance may be deferred. Nor does the mind think, except so far as it has ideas before it; we cannot say with Descartes that because the essence of mind is to think, the mind is always actually thinking. 'Every drowsy nod shakes their doctrine who declare that the mind thinks always.' But, while the mind is passive in respect of these two sources of experience, sensation and reflection, the mind is also active: it can attend, it can compare, distinguish and abstract. Hence arises the first important classification of ideas into two classes—simple and complex ideas. Simple ideas are the ultimate constituents of experience, the uncompounded appearances of things, complex ideas are the workmanship of the mind. Simple ideas are either the ideas of the sensible qualities of things derived by sensation of all kinds, the ideas of whiteness, heat and the like, or else they are the ideas of the operations of our minds which come to us by reflection, or else they are like pleasure or pain or existence, ideas which convey themselves into the mind by sensation or reflection indifferently, 'by all the ways of sensation and reflec-

tion.' These simple elements of experience the mind can neither make nor destroy, it can only receive; had we fewer or more senses we should receive fewer or more such ideas. Among simple ideas of sensation the most important distinction is that between the ideas of the primary qualities and the ideas of the secondary qualities of bodies—a distinction inherited by Locke from Descartes but introduced into philosophy, in its modern shape, by Galileo. Extension, figure, number, motion or rest, solidity,—these are qualities which bodies possess no matter what changes they undergo. Pound an almond or melt wax, the colours may change, but some figure and extension they still have. These qualities, then, are powers in bodies themselves, and really in them, whether any one's senses perceive them or no, in virtue of which they produce exactly corresponding ideas in us. But secondary qualities, like colour, taste, and smell, which change with varying circumstances, which may vanish for example with the absence of illumination, or be unfelt by a person who suffers from a cold, or may change in character according to the condition of the percipient, are not qualities in bodies themselves, but are powers which they possess of producing certain ideas in us, in virtue of their

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internal structure; that is, in virtue of the primary qualities of the insensible particles of which they are composed, for Locke assumes material bodies to be ultimately atomic in structure. It may be added that there is a third sort of qualities of bodies, powers which they possess to affect other external bodies, like the power of the sun to melt wax. It is these last which are commonly called powers. The ideas of the secondary qualities are, therefore, in one important respect, unlike those of the primary qualities, they do not resemble anything in the object, though popular thought thinks that bodies are in themselves red or sweet, in the same way as they are extended.

Simple ideas of reflection may be grouped under the two heads of thinking and willing. Sensible objects give us ideas. The acts of the mind, as engaged upon these ideas, give us the ideas of reflection by a kind of inner sense. Perception is the simplest operation we can thus be aware of, for apparently the act of sensation is nothing but bodily motion in the brain; the simplest idea of sensation is really an idea of perception. Retention, discrimination, comparison, abstraction (which puts a limit between man and brutes), are other examples. It is characteristic of Locke's imperfect consideration of what an idea is, that,



while strictly speaking, it is only 'retention' or 'memory' itself that should be an idea of reflection, he yet constantly speaks of remembered objects as ideas of reflection; though, in itself, a remembered person is no more an object of reflection than a perceived person. By doing so he seems to make the inner sense not only a source of ideas of mental operations, but a source of ideas which are not operations at all but in some sense a special mental reduplication of ideas of sensation—a doctrine full of fatal significance for subsequent thought. \*

The complex ideas introduce distinctions which present at once more interest and greater difficulty. They are the voluntary creations of the mind, which manipulates the materials derived from sensation and reflection, or they might be described as resolvable into these elements together with an active element of construction referable to the mind itself. Locke distinguishes three sorts, Modes, Substances, and Relations, of which Modes and Relations stand on an altogether different footing from Substances. Modes are complex ideas like jumping, triangle, gratitude, which are not regarded as self-subsistent but as affections of substances. They are either simple, or mixed, according as their simple con-

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stituents are of the same or different sorts. Thus, twelve is a mere repetition of unity; beauty is resolvable into the heterogeneous elements of colour, figure, pleasure, etc. Simple modes are thus variations of one simple idea—*e.g.* the different figures of extension, different sorts of motion, different numbers. One particularly interesting mode is infinity or immensity, whether of space or duration, which we get by (or is resolvable into) the addition of unit to unit and joining to this the negative idea that the process of addition may be carried on without limit, never coming to an end. Anticipating the more famous discussion of the same problem by Kant, Locke denies infinity to be a positive idea—there is no idea of a positive completed infinite—‘you cannot adapt a standing measure to a growing bulk.’ The chief examples of mixed modes (those which are resolvable into heterogeneous elements) are to be found in moral ideas, *e.g.* motive, justice. It is true that combinations of qualities in the real world may correspond to these ideas, or even suggest them. But in themselves they are put together arbitrarily by the mind, and the important consequence follows (for these and simple modes as well), that they have no standard external to themselves with which they can be com-

pared: they are their own archetypes, they are their own guarantee of reality. This same account applies to ideas of Relation, such as relation of king and subject, identity, cause and effect, and the like. All of them 'terminate in simple ideas,' are 'concerned with their simple ideas,' and are products of the mind's activity in considering them, 'so as to carry its view from one to the other.' Some of the more special sorts of relations, and in particular moral relations, will occupy us later.

The ideas of Substances are of a different nature. They, too, are the workmanship of the mind. We find a number of ideas of simple qualities going together in our experience, and we combine these ideas together under a single name, and regard them as belonging to one thing, but we also go on to suppose some support or substratum to the qualities in the thing which produces these simple ideas in us. We do not know what that support is, any more than the Indian philosopher Locke loves to quote, who declared that the world was supported by an elephant, the elephant by a tortoise, and the tortoise by he knew not what. This obscure idea of some support we know not what is the idea we have of substance in general, and 'it is the same every-

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where.<sup>1</sup> A particular kind of substance is then nothing but a group of simple ideas, regarded as so supported, and as flowing from the internal constitution of this unknown somewhat.

The Church, in the person of the Bishop of Worcester, alleged, in alarm for the doctrine of the Trinity, that Locke was almost discarding substance out of the world. Locke could answer easily enough, that so far from discarding it, he had catalogued it, vague as it was, in his inventory of experience, and had explained what kind of an idea it was. Locke might have been more embarrassed if he had been asked to explain how the mind could not only group together simple ideas as the ideas of one thing, but was able to invent the new idea of a support however indefinite. He was content to note in his inventory the existence of this idea without more narrowly analysing its nature.

But two consequences he drew from his account of substance, which are of great importance. The first is, that the idea of a spiritual substance is no less clear than that of a material one. A material substance is the unknown support of sensible qualities; spiritual substance is the unknown support of the qualities corresponding to the

<sup>1</sup> First letter to the Bishop of Worcester

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ideas of reflection. At the same time, this victorious conclusion needs to be qualified. Bodies and souls are alike the unknown supports of attributes. But bodies to Locke have a microscopic atomic constitution · a notion familiar to him from the speculations of Gassendi, or indeed from those of Bacon. It is but the coarseness of our senses and of our intelligence which conceals this constitution from us. Spirits more finely endowed than ours, like the angels', may penetrate further than ours into the constitution of bodies. But in regard to the soul, there is a peculiar obscurity. A substance it is, but we do not know whether it is an immaterial substance, or merely a material substance to which God has attached the power of thinking. The first hypothesis may be the more probable, and only those 'whose thoughts are immersed in matter' find it harder to conceive a spiritual than a bodily substance. But though God Himself, from whom all proceeds, is certainly an immaterial substance, there is no contradiction in the second hypothesis, which holds Him to have added thought to certain systems of senseless matter. 'All the great ends of worship and religion are well enough secured without philosophical proofs of the soul's immateriality.' The identity of the soul, whichever view be

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taken of it, consists in the identity of consciousness.

The second conclusion is of a different nature. A distinction was current in the schools, between the real essence of substances and the nominal essence or definition. Locke spends himself in argument to prove that we know only nominal essences, and that they are the names of sorts of things by which we identify a particular thing as belonging to a class,—they are groups of ideas connected together by names. They are thus general ideas formed by abstraction. The real essence is ‘that real constitution of anything, which is the foundation of the qualities combined in the nominal essence,’—it is to him that minute microscopic constitution, from which the obvious sensible qualities combined in the definition are supposed to flow. This real essence of things we do not know, because our senses fail to carry us so far. It follows, to anticipate a little, that our knowledge of substances is confined to the abstract collections of ideas which are signified by the general names of substances.

Our brief *résumé* of the chief titles in Locke’s inventory of experience is not intended to do more than indicate the wealth of detailed description which makes the second book of the *Essay*

a storehouse of metaphysical and psychological knowledge Nor does it attempt at all to follow Locke in his survey of words in the third book. But we may conveniently stop for a moment, before passing on to consider Locke's theory of knowledge, in order to review the picture here presented of the ideas which we possess, the objects of our mind when we think. They are all resolvable into two kinds of simple experiences, ideas of sense qualities, and of mental operations. These simple ideas all correspond to the real things, whose existence Locke assumes, and which are supposed to produce them in our minds: they are 'such perceptions as God has fitted us to receive, and given power to external objects (he is speaking of simple ideas of sensation), to produce in us by established laws and ways, suitable to his wisdom and goodness, though incomprehensible to us' They are in Locke's language real, adequate, and true. Some of them are exact copies of their originals, others do not resemble them. But they are but the materials of our experience. The finished objects of our experience are our own handiwork. On the one hand, we have a set of objects, of which the chief are mathematical and ethical constructions, which are real and adequate in their own right, self-

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contained because not fashioned according to any exemplar beyond them. These objects contain a wealth of properties, which may be drawn from them by demonstration. On the other hand we have substances whether material things or minds, and these we do not experience in themselves, but only so far as we receive simple ideas from them. We are left then strangely with a twofold reality. There is one reality, which belongs to certain of our ideas, like the mathematical ones, because they are wholly of our making. There is another reality of substances which supply us with the ideas that we receive from them, which are behind the veil of the appearances by which we know them. This reality we know only partially, and cannot thoroughly know.

This survey of ideas anticipates the answer to the problem of the limits of knowledge, which it was Locke's main object to solve. Knowledge, as already explained, is the perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas. Ideas are but the elements of knowledge, we have knowledge when we perceive their connections. What is known is thus ideas in their connection. According to Locke, the connection may be one of four kinds. It may be that of identity or diversity, as when we perceive that white is white, and is not



black; or of relation, *e.g.* three is greater than two, or co-existence, *e.g.* gold is 'fixed,' which means the co-existence of fixedness with the defining qualities of gold, or lastly, there is a fourth kind of agreement or disagreement, 'that of actual real existence agreeing to an idea,' which may be reserved for later explanation.

Knowledge so defined, to be really knowledge, is either directly or indirectly intuitive. Direct intuition is the immediate perception of such agreement or disagreement—it is immediate certainty—'irresistible,' 'like bright sunshine', and on it all certainty of knowledge depends. Indirect intuition is demonstration, where our ideas are brought into relation by the mediation of a third, each step in the demonstration being itself intuitive. Supposing that there could be innate ideas and principles which the mind brings along with it, their intuitive character would accordingly not serve to distinguish them from any other kind of knowledge which is knowledge in the strict sense. But there are three questions which may profitably be asked about knowledge, concerned as it is with ideas. How far does it extend? How far is it real or conformable to things? How much can it tell us of actual existence?

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The answer to the first two questions turns entirely on the difference between ideas of substances and all other ideas. Our senses are not acute enough to tell us of the primary qualities of the minute particles of bodies, nor our intelligence to inform us of the structure composed by these particles. We can therefore neither know why the body produces in us the ideas of certain qualities included in their nominal essence, nor, what is more important, what is the connection between these qualities themselves, and consequently between these qualities and other qualities which we may discover in them. Further we have to remember, as Locke says in a striking passage, that substances do not stand alone, but are related to one another, and dependent for their qualities on remote causes which may be unperceived. ‘Separate a piece of gold from all other bodies, and it would lose all its colour and weight and perhaps malleableness too.’ ‘We see and perceive some of the actions and grosser operations of things here about us, but whence the streams come that keep all these curious machines in motion and repair, how conveyed and modified, is beyond notice and apprehension. . . . Things, however absolute and entire they seem in themselves, are but retainers to other parts of nature

for that which they are most taken notice of by us.'

It is plain then that our knowledge cannot extend beyond our ideas, but also that it must fall short of the range of our ideas, whenever we fail to bring our ideas into relation with one another. Thus though we have an idea of matter and of thinking we may never be able to know whether matter thinks. We are limited in our knowledge of the co-existence of qualities in bodies because we do not know the ultimate constitution of things. We can go little further than our experience. And if this is true of bodies, it is still more true of spirits which are only known in our persons, while we know nothing of other possible spirits in the universe, but can only conjecture. Whereas the extent of our knowledge of mathematical and moral relations appears to be indefinite and inexhaustible.

When we ask how far our knowledge is real or true—how far, that is, it differs from mere imagination and conforms to things—the answer is similar. Mathematical and moral knowledge, since these ideas are their own archetypes, is real and true. But our ideas of substances are referred to archetypes existing beyond ideas. Our knowledge of them can only therefore be true so far as it is

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founded upon experience and sensible observations. Hence, to state the same thing otherwise, the important result that a definite limit is set to our acquisition of universal knowledge. So far as ideas are abstract their agreement or disagreement will constitute universal knowledge; wherever therefore, as in mathematics, we have abstract ideas we can obtain universal knowledge. Now of substances we know only their nominal essences. These are abstract, but we can derive very little further knowledge from them because, as explained, not knowing the constitution of things, we do not know the connection between the qualities which make up the nominal essence. We are then limited to the particular knowledge of substances derived from particular experiences. Such generalisations as we can make as to the co-existence of their properties, wanting as they are in adequate foundation, do not amount to more than probability, useful enough for practice, but falling short of science. They are not matter of knowledge but of judgment. Science, which is universal, is thus only possible in the unfolding of an abstract idea, and consequently Locke is 'apt to doubt a science of physical bodies as out of our reach'; our physical knowledge is at best empirical.

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The inadequacy of our knowledge of substances is plainer still if we ask ourselves what are the things of which we are warranted in holding not merely that they are real or true like mathematics but that they have actual existence. At first sight it might seem difficult to understand how, if knowledge is the perception of the agreement of ideas, we can have knowledge of actual existence at all. For actual existence outside the world of ideas is not itself an idea and cannot be compared with other ideas. But what Locke means is clear enough: it is the undoubted fact that certain ideas come to us with a 'coefficient of reality,' as it has been called, a 'tang' which distinguishes them from mere ideas or imaginations. They carry us beyond the mere idea to something else, which is what we call real existence. There are two such ideas of whose existence we may have certainty: ourselves and God. Of our own existence we have intuitive knowledge, to doubt it is, in Descartes' language which Locke accepts, to be assured of it in the very act of doubting. Of God's existence we have demonstrative knowledge. For I myself exist, there must therefore be some real being to account for my beginning to be, and this real being must exist from all eternity (or it too would have had

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a beginning and therefore a further cause). Moreover this being as the source of all our powers and knowledge must be most powerful and most knowing—in a word, it is God. The pungency of my own existence is thus by this argument communicated through the principle of causality to God. But Locke, though he regards it as an intuitive truth that nothing can begin to be except it is produced by some real thing, does not ask himself how the idea of causation, gathered according to his own account from the suggestion of connected changes in things, can be extended so as to apply to a cause like God which never can be presented in sensible or reflective experience.

Of the existence of ourselves and of God we have thus, according to Locke, complete conviction. When we turn to material things, we find that while we can at pleasure call up or lay by the ideas of memory or fancy, we are passive in respect of external objects. When we look at the sun, we cannot avoid having the idea of light. There must needs be 'some exterior cause which produces these ideas in my mind whether I will or no.' Moreover a present material thing affects us with a certain force or vivacity which distinguishes it from a mere imagination. It is the difference between seeing the sun by day and think-

ing of it by night. To the objector who urges that the fire may be all a dream, Locke never tires of begging him 'to dream this answer', that there is a manifest difference between dreaming of being in the fire and being actually in it, and at any rate the pain of the second experience makes the difference between our weal and woe, and determines us practically. Such knowledge Locke calls sensitive knowledge. It is less than intuition and is therefore less than knowledge proper, but it is more than mere 'judgment.' Our knowledge of the nature of sensible things is thus the particular knowledge of our observations of them, and our knowledge of their actual existence is the sensible experience of their presence so long as they are present; or it may be added, the memory that they were once so sensibly perceived.

What falls outside the range of knowledge thus described belongs to the sphere of judgment or probability, and it thus includes the greater part of our beliefs and the propositions we make, in particular the greater part of what is thought to constitute physical science. It supplies what is necessary for conduct, where the conviction or intuition necessary for knowledge fails us. Such propositions are attended not by certainty but by assent. The mind puts ideas together, when their

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agreement is not perceived, but only presumed. It may do this in respect of matter of fact, either because of conformity to our own observation, or the ground of probability may be the testimony of others. In matters which are not open to the observation of the senses, like the minute constitution of things, we rely in our judgments upon analogy. The strength of our assent varies in degree according to various circumstances, the concurrence of testimony, the agreement of testimony with experience, the remoteness of the testimony and the like. But Locke has supplied no rules by which we may judge the relative probability of judgments, such as are offered by 'inductive' logic.



## CHAPTER III

### OBSERVATIONS ON THE *ESSAY*

LIKE other great writers and thinkers, Locke leaves many strands of thought not woven into one perfect tissue, loose ends are not connected, gaps are left to be filled in the structure. It is not difficult to point out these defects, and his successors were occupied in overcoming them. But it is more helpful to begin by indicating certain features of the *Essay* which are impressive by their fertility of suggestion.

1 The general character of his method, in reviewing the contents of experience as a means towards indicating the limits of knowledge, follows the habit of the practical man, which begins with certain loose assumptions that, in the course of the inquiry, take on a changed aspect and receive a new signification. Locke's assumption of real substances, to which knowledge conforms in various degrees, is easy enough to criticise. If the only objects of our minds are ideas, how can things which are not themselves ideas be made

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the object of thought, still less be compared with ideas? The answer is that Locke, insisting on the philosophical doctrine that all the objects of our thought are mental in the sense before defined, is content to assume side by side with these the existence of minds and of material things. But things which at the beginning of the *Essay* are the mysterious causes of our ideas turn out in the end to be merely the limits of our knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Step by step as he proceeds in the inquiry the material thing receives definition. The ideas of the primary qualities are exact copies of the primary qualities themselves, or in other words, in certain vital respects the contents of the real object are the same as those of the representative one. The secondary qualities are still as in the thing entirely unlike their ideas. But even this apparent breach is narrowed. For the ultimate nature of the thing is held to be a structure of particles insensible to us, and were our senses and our intelligence acute enough to know the primary qualities of these particles and the plan of their combination, we should have an exact representation of the thing. 'The now secondary qualities of bodies would disappear if we could

<sup>1</sup> The same observation is true of Kant, though Kant's result is different.

discover the primary ones of their minute parts . . . We should see an admirable texture of parts of a certain size and figure.’<sup>1</sup> The sensible qualities and the gross superficial (macroscopic) primary ones would be replaced by microscopic primary ones. Were this result but attained (and we must add, the connection of things with other things also observed), knowledge would be entirely adequate. For though our knowledge would still be of ideas, there would be nothing in the things themselves which would not have its exact counterpart in ideas, except the unknown something which makes the difference between ideas and actual things. Ultimately therefore the limit to our knowledge of things is set by our defective sense and intelligence. Though no finite spirit which knows only by ideas could behold reality face to face, reality is in the end something not remote from ideas, for it corresponds to them, and it is but our deficiencies which prevent us from knowing it, as far as it can be known at all. Locke declines the question of the real constitution of spirit, whether it is an immaterial substance or a material substance to which is attached the power of thinking. But he speaks of ‘thinking and willing as primary

<sup>1</sup> *Essay*, Book II., ch. xxiii. § 11

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qualities of spirit.’<sup>1</sup> Had he asked himself what reason there was for supposing thinking as in the mind to be different from the thinking which we apprehend—the idea of thinking—he might have seen that his separation of ideas in general from things was needless.

2 One of Locke’s cardinal merits is his insistence that no mere words shall take the place of a clear description of the contents of our experience, or shall make us think that we have ideas which we cannot find in our experience. Books I. to III. are a long descant upon this theme. And it is this which gives point to a famous portion of Locke’s theory which we have not yet described, his denial of innate ideas whether in thinking or in morals. In the abstract which he wrote of the *Essay* for Leclerc’s *Bibliothèque Universelle* he omits this topic which occupies the whole first Book of the *Essay*, with the remark that it was designed to overcome the prejudices entertained against the belief that the mind was *tabula rasa*. Readers of the *Essay* are often provoked with what they think the triviality of Locke’s attempted refutation of innate ideas, amounting, they think, to little more than the proof that we do not have these ideas at birth, and that we acquire them

<sup>1</sup> *Essay*, Book II., ch. xxiii § 30.

only by experience, after we have acquired other portions of knowledge no less evident. Such innate ideas, it is urged, are not those which Lord Herbert of Cherbury assumed, or Descartes intended by his innate ideas, nor are they such as have been intended by others after Locke who, admitting that experience is needed to evoke these principles to explicit operation, have urged that they themselves are implicit in the mind. Now it was just this conception of implicit knowledge which Locke desired to repudiate 'To imprint anything on the mind without the mind's perceiving it seems to me hardly intelligible.' Whatever is in the mind must be discoverable there, and he thought that the notion of innate principles clouded the issue with words and substituted empty language for the real effort to discover ideas. He did not deny the truth or the self-evidence of these principles, and he even thought them useful as a means of avoiding sophistry in controversy. Still less did he maintain that the mind itself though a white paper to the world of objects was itself a passive instrument. But he claimed, and he claimed rightly, that the mind should not be credited with mysterious knowledge, not verifiable as an idea, and his answer is still valid against those who would endow the mind with methods

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of envisaging objects (categories and the like) which it imports into the object itself. It is this consideration, that what is claimed to be a factor in experience must be found there and catalogued in the inventory, which gives its philosophical importance to Locke's polemic. And it is therefore not strange, that the attack upon innate ideas should have come to be that part of Locke's teaching which the public connected habitually with his name.

So far as Locke himself attempted the problem raised by such 'categories' of thought, and he did not seriously attempt it, he supplied indications of a better way. He looked, for instance, for the relation of causality, or power, to experience itself, and crude and imperfect as his description of it is, he found it there. But he added that it is less obviously experienced in the relations of material bodies than in the operation of the mind itself when it wills the direction of its ideas, or controls the movement of its body—a just view though misunderstood, and therefore rejected, by Hume. So far, at least, he sought to find for what afterwards were called categories their real counterparts in his experience. And what he did went but a little way. He never applied the same principle to the better understanding of the

nature of substance from observation of the continuity of mental operations. Had he carried this line of thought a little further, he might have recognised in the structure of the system of ideas, whether of sense or reflection, certain fundamental ideas which form the skeleton of the structure and have thus a prerogative place in experience.

3. Locke's declaration that physical science is impossible, because universal knowledge can only be derived from abstract ideas, is notable because it makes mathematics the ideal of scientific thought. Compared with mathematics, physics as a collection of empirical knowledge supplies only probability. He stands thus in strong contrast with those of his successors (like J. S. Mill) who, attempting to put mathematics on an empirical basis, have sought to reduce it to the level of the physical sciences. At the same time Locke's doctrine, that if there is to be physical science at all it must be derived from the investigation of abstract ideas, has been the parent of much similar thought, and it is revived without Locke's pessimism as to physics in a doctrine which at the present time is at any rate highly accredited, that scientific conceptions and truths are convenient abstractions which happen to be attested and verified by facts, but are themselves merely

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creations of the mind, which serve as a shorthand or compendious description of physical data. Both Locke's doctrine and its modern counterpart have their characteristic difficulties. Locke held that mathematics, while derived from the construction of mind, is no mere analysis of what was contained in certain conceptions, but led to new truths: it discovered not 'trifling' or 'verbal' but 'instructive' propositions. But he neither inquired what compulsive force there was in figures or numbers which drove their investigators into fresh discovery, nor how or in what sense these abstract creations could be exemplified in the world of fact. The same difficulties may be objected to the current revival of Locke's doctrine in physical science.

The last topic naturally leads on to the mention of some of Locke's palpable defects, which not all his cautious efforts to trace the boundaries between the enlightened and the dark parts of things can conceal. But Locke's defects had the value of stimulating the thought of his successors. Out of Locke grew not only Berkeley and Hume, but indirectly Kant and Reid. These defects turn upon one or two main points—his imperfect connection and imperfect disconnection of the mind and external things, the individualistic character



of his philosophy, his oversight of the central fact of continuity.

1. The antithesis between the two kinds of realities, the constructions of the mind and substances, raises at once difficulties which Locke never resolved. Mathematical figures, to take them as incontestable examples of modes, owe their elements to sense, but their construction to the mind. Now Locke admits that moral ideas, which he places on the same footing as mathematical ideas, may be gathered from observation. This is obviously true of mathematical ideas also. But how can it be more than a coincidence? He does not explain how mathematical and moral reality can be applicable to sensible reality. Modes are, indeed, defined as groups of ideas regarded not as independent, but as affections of substances. Yet in the sequel, they are treated as real in their own right, and floated off into an atmosphere of their own. At the same time Locke sees, as has just been noticed, that creatures as they are of the mind, they constrain us to think about them in certain ways as much as if they were sensible objects. And yet they do this, not because they correspond to anything in the nature of the mind, but because they are triangles or circles or moral ideas. They are as real

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as substances, but they have no actual existence, and yet they are exemplified in the world of actual existence. It was this problem left unsolved or rather unraised by Locke which Kant attempted (impelled no doubt in part by Locke), when he asked how mathematics can be true of the real world—or in the technical phrase how the synthetic propositions of mathematics are possible. His answer, or at least part of it, was that space and time were brought by the mind itself to experience. Whatever value can be attached to the solution, it was of the highest importance to raise the problem. Locke would have rejected the solution, but his own conception of mathematics and their place in experience prepared the way for it.

2. Locke's object was to describe the contents of experience, but his method was a mixture of description and assumption, and the severance of ideas from things as the mental copies of them arises from this defect. Had he described without assumption what he found in his mind, he would have discovered nothing but objects of various sorts; which he might have called ideas to indicate their relation to mind. There would have been substances, possibly vaguely apprehended, in which simple qualities inhered, but there would

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have been no world behind the ideas. But he assumed from common thought the existence of permanent things independent of our apprehensions of them, and he maintained with this the philosophical tenet derived from Descartes that the only objects we know must be ideas. The true proposition, that things show themselves to be related to mind in so far as we apprehend them, he converted like his teacher into the proposition that we do not know things directly but only through mental phantasms, which are not indeed mere affections of mind, but are suspended somewhere betwixt mind and real things, and sometimes dangerously approach the condition of mental affections. This is what Hume afterwards described as the philosophical invention of a twofold existence—a doctrine fathered by philosophy upon common-sense, but which common-sense does not entertain, because it has not faced the question. It is true that Locke himself, as has been insisted, cared little about the problems he had so raised, and that his whole interest lay in knowing how far these ideas could give us knowledge of their exemplars. But subsequent philosophy has employed itself with varying success in ridding itself of the phantasms which Descartes and Locke have conjured up. Locke

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- himself saw that ideas of primary qualities stood in an intimacy of relation with their archetypes which half destroyed their separateness. It was easy for Berkeley to show that there was no reason for preferring them to the ideas of secondary qualities in this respect. And therefore, he denied the existence of sensible things in Locke's sense, denied, that is, the distinction of sensible things from ideas of sensation. Reid took a different line, and insisted that our elementary experiences are judgments, that our sensations 'suggest' real external things, that is, are the occasions upon which we, according to a natural law, apprehend external things, of which we are therefore directly aware. Had Locke confined himself to ideas in his own sense, he would have recognised (as he does) that we experience both minds and sensible things, as supplied by reflection and sensation respectively; and that sensible things, while they claim a real existence, are mental in character in so far as they are inter-related with minds in the same universe and affect them.

3. One vital consequence followed from Locke's conception of ideas. So far as ideas are presented to (or are in the mind), these objects are the peculiar possession of the individual mind which thinks them. On the other hand, so far as they

are always regarded as corresponding to some thing, which by God's good pleasure produces them, we tend to forget their individual character. Locke faithfully describes the world as he finds it, but because there is the background of independent real things, we forget that the ideas are relative only to the individual. Locke, in fact, invests his ideas with all the characters that belong to the real world of objects, which are not confined to one man's inspection, but are open to all. Strictly speaking, the ideas belong only to the individual, and Locke is ready to admit that this is so. The common use of language between man and man implies that they give the same names to corresponding ideas, but 'when he represents to himself other men's ideas by some of his own, if he consent to give them the same names that other men do, it is still to his own ideas.'<sup>1</sup> But when mental objects are thus individual, they fail of the universal character which we attribute to the objects of knowledge. To quote the famous example of Kant, there is a great difference between the experience that when I see the sun shine I feel the stone grow warm, and the experience that the sun warms the stone. The second proposition is knowledge, and is the

<sup>1</sup> *Essay*, Book III, ch. ii § 2

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common object of all; the first is part of the contents of the mind of an individual, or if we use the word history in Locke's sense, it is part of the life-history of an individual. Strictly speaking, knowledge, as Locke conceives it, is part of the life-history of an individual. Such individualism is inevitable, if the objects we know, the ideas, are detached from the objects themselves. We can no more acquire common knowledge from putting together the life-histories of individuals, than we could get a state from putting together a number of purely self-seeking agents. It was Kant's great merit to have recognised this problem, though it by no means follows that we must accept his solution of it. What we may do is to deny the existence of ideas, as copies of things, and to recognise that we directly apprehend the things themselves.

4. Locke's individualism arose from his severing ideas from things. Had he, describing experience, omitted ideas or omitted things, he need not have been open to this charge. He can only bring mind and mind together by the happy accident that they think alike. But in another important respect he falls short of his own ideal of describing the contents of experience. He overlooks the fact of continuity. The objects of

experience are to him fragmentary and disconnected. It is not strictly true to say, as has sometimes been said, that for him every idea must be gone as soon as apprehended. For ideas may contain the relations of persistence and identity. These relations are themselves part of our world of ideas. What is true is that the connections between ideas are external to them. Qualities are grouped together by the mechanical bond of an underlying support or substance. Effect follows cause in the external world in empirical succession. Ideas have identity 'when they vary not at all from what they were at that moment wherein we consider their former existence, and to which we compare the present,' *i.e.* their identity is not individual continuity but likeness of quality. The same account applies to all the other 'relations' between ideas which knowledge directly apprehends. For though when the ideas are 'considered together' their agreement or disagreement is not external but follows from the nature of the ideas, yet the ideas must first be 'considered together' for their relation to be perceived. Three is known to be greater than two, and white different from black as soon as they are compared, but there is nothing, so far as Locke's description goes, in

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three or in white, which compels us to compare them with two or with black. It is true that Locke is feeling after the real nature of causality when, as already mentioned, he seeks for it in the experience of our volitions. But to all intents and purposes, in spite of his urging the inter-relatedness of things, the world is to him a number of isolated atoms grouped together in the last resort by the good pleasure of God, as indeed his follower Berkeley explicitly affirmed. Locke's badinage of Malebranche's opinion that 'we see all things in God' is a good illustration of his insensibility to the cardinal fact of continuity. Malebranche had said that 'when we would think of anything in particular, we at first cast our view upon all beings,'—meaning that each thing is seen as a fragment or a limitation of the whole vague universe. 'I do not think,' says Locke, 'that my country neighbours, when they first wake in the morning, find it impossible to think of a lame horse they have, till they have run over in their minds "all beings" that are, and then pitch on dapple.'

The omission of continuity in the description of experience is a case of oversight—inexplicable enough, were it not that description is the most difficult of tasks, but shared with Locke by a long



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line of successors. The failure to recognise it led to frank scepticism in Hume, it led in Kant to attempts to overcome the disconnectedness of the world by mechanical inventions like the categories. The oversight was not confined to sensible things; it applied to the mind also. For the mind as described by Locke is as disconnected as the qualities of external things. There is nothing but the spiritual substance which supports the group or succession of mental operations. Locke overlooks the fact, as important and as plain to us as thinking or willing itself, that the mind's action is 'sensibly continuous.' It was not till recent years that the face of psychology was changed by substituting the experienced fact of mental continuity for the inherited conception or prejudice that the mind is known only as a series of mental events.

## CHAPTER IV

### ETHICS

LOCKE's contribution to Ethics in the *Essay* is short, but it is remarkable. Good and evil are nothing but 'pleasure and pain or that which occasions pleasure and pain to us.' 'Moral good or evil then is only the conformity or disagreement of our voluntary actions to some law whereby good and evil are drawn on us from the will and power of the law-maker; which good or evil, pleasure or pain, attending our observance or breach of the law, by the decree of the law-maker, is that we call reward and punishment.' Moral good or evil is thus a relation of human actions, which are modes, to other modes which are rules of action. Locke enumerates three sorts of moral codes, with their enforcements or 'sanctions'—the divine law, 'which is the measure of sin and duty, given by God whether by revelation or the light of nature'; the civil law, the measure of crime and innocence; and the law of opinion, reputation or fashion, which is the measure of virtue or

vice, these terms being partly coincident with the divine law, but only so far as the opinion of societies, tribes or clubs of men agrees with that law, which it in a great measure does. When we ask what the contents of the moral law are, Locke offers us a startling doctrine. 'The idea of a Supreme Being infinite in power, goodness and wisdom, whose workmanship we are and on whom we depend; and the idea of ourselves as understanding rational beings, being such as are clear in us, would, I suppose, if duly considered and pursued afford such foundations of our duty and rules of action as might place morality amongst the sciences capable of demonstration, wherein I doubt not but from self-evident propositions, by necessary consequences as incontestable as those in mathematics, the measures of right and wrong might be made out.' The science which Aristotle regarded as less certain even than physical science Locke puts on the level of mathematics. He gives as illustration two propositions 'as certain as any demonstration in Euclid: 'where there is no property, there is no injustice'; and 'no government allows absolute liberty.' The complexity of moral ideas and their want of sensible representation are, he thinks, the reasons why as compared with mathematics morality is thought incapable of

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demonstration. Molyneux urged Locke to publish a treatise of Ethics based on this conception, and Locke seems to have entertained the idea of doing so, which was not however realised. How much he recognised that human reasoning unassisted by religion falls short of what is required by his ideal of Ethics may be seen from a passage of the *Reasonableness of Christianity*. ‘Experience shows that the knowledge of morality by mere natural light (how agreeable soever it be to it) makes but a slow progress and little advance in the world. And the reason of it is not hard to be found in men’s necessities, passions, vices and mistaken interests, which turn their thoughts another way, and the designing leaders as well as following herd find it not to their purpose to employ much of their meditations this way. Human reason unassisted failed men in its great and proper business of morality. It never from unquestionable principles made out an entire body of the “law of nature.”’ We can only conjecture what the science would have been. God and His attributes are known to us by demonstration, and ourselves by direct intuition, and, as the sentence just quoted indicates, Locke would probably, as Sidgwick suggests, have demonstrated from man’s nature the body of laws which under

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the name of laws of nature he inherited from Grotius and Puffendorf. It is certain that in Locke's view the value of moral laws is not derived from the pleasure and pain they bring by way of sanction. He does not even allow with Bentham and his school, the so-called Hedonists, that human action is determined by the prospect of pleasure or pain. On the contrary, he maintains that it is determined by present 'uneasiness' or desire. Though we all do desire happiness and in the end good is what is productive of pleasure, the laws of morality are not based upon a utilitarian foundation but follow from the nature of man and his relation to God.

But the same unsolved problem which met us in his treatment of mathematics, how mathematical laws can be valid of sensible facts, confronts us again in a corresponding form in Ethics. How can propositions, which follow from abstract human nature, be applicable to or true of a world of concrete men? Moral judgments vary from country to country and from age to age. This was one of Locke's reasons, and a correct one, for denying the innateness of moral principles. But it does not seem to have disturbed his belief in the abstract character of moral laws. Yet it implies either that these varying and conflicting

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judgments are not moral or else that morality is not abstract. The greater the difficulty there is in arriving at an abstract conception of human nature or of what God intended man to be, the more it seems we must turn for a basis of moral judgment to considering the actual passions and circumstances of mankind.

The only other memorable chapter which Locke writes on Ethics, or rather the psychology of Ethics, is the extremely perplexed and perplexing discussion of the freedom of the will—which he modified considerably in his life-time, and professed himself dissatisfied with to the end. Locke denies that we can speak intelligibly of freedom of the will, since the will is one power and freedom is another. It is the whole man who is free. We are free so far as we can act or forbear action; yet we are not free to act otherwise than we do, to maintain that we are would be to declare that a man is not pleased to do what he is pleased to do. Yet just when Locke appears to be committing himself to determinism, he declares that true freedom is found in the power we have of suspending judgment before action, and consequently the right improvement of our liberty consists in right consideration, in the government of the passions, in the constant

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determination of 'prosecuting true felicity,' and 'suspending this prosecution in particular cases, till they have looked before them, and informed themselves whether that particular thing which is then proposed or desired lie in the way to their main end, and make a real part of that which is their greatest good.'

## CHAPTER V

### POLITICS

‘THE power of the civil law,’ Locke says in the *Essay*, ‘is the force of the commonwealth engaged to protect the lives, liberties and possessions of those who live according to its laws, and has power to take away life, liberty or goods from him who disobeys.’ He uses precisely identical terms in defining political power in the second and more famous of the two *Treatises of Government* which were published in 1690, in the same year as the *Essay*. Half of what he wrote or designed appears to have been lost, but Locke hopes that the papers which remain ‘are sufficient to establish the throne of our great Restorer, our present King William, and make good his title in the consent of the people; which, being the only one of all lawful governments, he has more fully and clearly than any prince in Christendom; and to justify to the world the people of England, whose love of their just and natural rights, with their resolution to preserve them, saved the nation



when it was on the very brink of slavery and ruin.' The first treatise is a destructive criticism of Filmer's *Patriarcha*, a work designed to establish the claims of absolute monarchy as inherited from Adam. Filmer appears to have been so far historical in his method as the Pentateuch, which he took for his authority, gives us a picture of patriarchal society, which at any rate was one form of government. But neither it nor Locke's criticism of it interests us here

The second treatise explains the nature of civil society, by tracing its growth from the state of nature or primitive condition of man, conceived in the fashion in which it had come down from the Stoics and Roman lawyers, who identified it with the Age of Gold. It is a state of peace, and is governed, if the term may be allowed, by the law of nature supposed to be given to men by the 'light of nature.' According to this law men are free to dispose of themselves and their possessions as they think fit; they are equal, and bound in virtue of their equality to mutual benevolence. Their liberty is no licence; reason teaches men that no one has a right to harm another in his health, liberty or possessions. But as he is bound to preserve himself, so he is to preserve them. In the state of nature every man

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has a right to punish a transgressor, requiting him as reason and conscience dictate. Two doctrines are of special interest and importance. The right of property belongs to any man, in so far as he takes any part of the common possession, and mixes his labour with it—a doctrine fruitful of consequences in subsequent thought. The rights and duty of the parent arise from the weakness of the children, and the necessity of rearing them through infancy; and Locke thinks that the institution of marriage depends on that of the family: it is the fact that a second child may be born before the first is independent of its parents that leads to permanent marriage.

From the inconveniences of this state of nature civil society arises. For there is no settled law allowed by common consent; the law of nature is indeed plain, but men are biassed by their interest; there is no ‘indifferent’ judge and no sufficient power of enforcement. Men therefore by consent divest themselves of their natural liberty by uniting into a community ‘for their comfortable, safe and peaceable living in a secure enjoyment of their properties’; the united body acting through the will of the majority. This is the institution of commonwealth in a contract of citizens with one another. The first result of this

compact—‘the first and fundamental positive law’—is the establishing of the legislative power, the supreme power to which government is delegated in trust. But the law of nature is not abandoned by the individual’s surrender of his liberties to the state, but on the contrary, ‘its obligations are only in many cases drawn closer, and have by human laws known penalties annexed to them, to enforce their observation.’ The legislative power receives therefore no arbitrary authority, but it is limited by the public good of the society. An executive is established for permanent enforcement of the law, but may be removed by the legislative. The prince or monarch holds his commission therefore as a trust conferred on him by the law; his prerogative is but ‘the power left in his hands to provide for the public good, in such cases which, depending on unforeseen and uncertain occurrences, certain and unalterable laws could not safely direct.’ When the prince abuses or neglects his trust, or when the legislature abuses its trust, the government is dissolved, and the people can provide for themselves by establishing a new one.

Locke’s conception of civil society and government is thus completely foreign to that of a theocracy, and is directed against such a concep-

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tion. He maintained that civil society and the church have entirely different concerns. 'The power of civil government relates only to man's civil interests.' But 'a church I take to be a voluntary society of men joining themselves together, of their own accord, in order to the public worshipping of God, in such a manner as they judge acceptable to Him and effectual to the salvation of their souls.' The whole doctrine of the *Letter Concerning Toleration*, from which these words are taken, follows from this. The magistrate, as such, has no concern with religion; he cannot interfere with worship and belief. He can only do so legitimately in so far as religious worship or doctrine brings the members of a church into conflict with the good of the civil society. And it is only so far as this is the case—so far, that is, as they may be influenced in their civil relations by obedience to an external authority—that Locke denies toleration to Roman Catholics; and only because to disbelieve in God renders a man unfit for civil life that he excludes Atheists from the benefit of the toleration which he would extend to Mahomedans.

The effort of Locke's political doctrine (and hence its historical, as distinguished from its philosophical, importance) was to 'establish William's

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throne on the consent of the people.' The effort of Hobbes's doctrine of the State in the *Leviathan* was to justify the divine right of the Stuarts. With Hobbes the state of nature is one of warfare from which the law of nature or reason bids man depart in order to self-preservation, handing over their rights to a man or body of men, the sovereign. The sovereign, with Hobbes, bears the rights of all the members of the society, is the 'person' of the commonwealth, and is therefore distinct altogether from Locke's monarch, or prince, whose capacity is only fiduciary. With Locke, on the other hand, the state of nature is not left behind, but the law of nature which regulated it is continued into civil society and enforces the ideal conditions of the state of nature. Both writers employ the fiction of a social contract, arising out of the supposed state of nature after experience of its inconveniences. Locke pleads that the state of nature may actually still be traced in the relations of princes, and even in certain peoples who act by popular consent. But he says, in answer to those who doubt the genesis of commonwealth from a state of nature, that naturally enough the state of nature eludes our historical search, for 'government is everywhere anterior to records,' and early peoples are actually

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found already under paternal government, the head or father of the group being chosen as the fittest to govern. In truth, the picture of the origin of society from a state of nature by an original compact only illustrates the natural tendency to account for society by analysing it into its fundamental elements and then making the historical assumptions that these elements existed before the society itself was created. According as the imagination of the writer was more impressed by the Yahoo or the Houyhnhnm in human nature, he described the state of nature as one of war or of benevolence. In Locke this tendency is parallel to that which led him in his philosophy partially to confuse the analysis of complex ideas into their simple elements with the historical statement or fiction that simple ideas precede, and are combined by the mind into, complex ideas

The fiction of the original compact by consent of the people (a fiction almost unavoidable if abstract theories must be clothed in the language of concrete life) really did attach the belief of Locke, as it did that of Hobbes and of the writers to whom Locke owes most for his political speculation, of whom Hooker was the chief. It was shared by the later writer, Rousseau, whom he

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anticipated. In an important respect Locke fell short of Rousseau; he did not reach that writer's conception of the 'general will' as the sovereign, but contented himself with the consent of the people acting by the majority, by what Rousseau called the 'will of all.' He missed the organic or personal feature in civil society. In this respect Hobbes's conception of the sovereign as the 'person' or bearer of the rights of the commonwealth is superior to Locke's. Only once does he approach this conception, when he points to the natural or 'federative' power of a commonwealth, whereby (as in war) it acts as one body against an external nation. The body politic is, for Locke, an aggregate of consenting individuals; just as in metaphysics the knowledge, which is the common property of all, appears to be the propositions which all happen to make identically. And as in his metaphysics this defect was concealed by his assumption of a world of real existences, which was there for every one to acquire knowledge of through ideas, it was concealed in his political theory by the persistence of the supposed objective and universal 'laws of nature,' from the state of nature into civil society.

Locke's doctrine of civil government may be said to have represented the better spirit of the

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Revolution. But neither that doctrine nor the doctrine of toleration was received with universal or immediate acceptance in England. But they set up the ideal of thinking in matters of civil and religious liberty for the next century. Toleration was introduced in England not at once, nor in the form which Locke demanded as the non-interference of the state in religion, but in the form of indulgence, of removal (and a qualified one) of the restrictions on dissenters as compared with the favoured church. The speculative foundations of Locke's political doctrine have given way or have needed repair. But its political influence was great, and due allowance being made for its speculative defects, it represents not only the ideals of the finer minds of 1688, but in substance the common-sense of our political constitution as we have come to understand it. It exercised a most powerful influence through its effect upon Montesquieu. When the terms of the fundamental declaration of American independence were borrowed as they were from Locke's political treatise, Locke rendered a greater service to political liberty than when he drafted or helped to draft the constitutions of Carolina, which appear to have been inoperative.



## CHAPTER VI

### RELIGION

THE concluding chapters of the *Essay* set forth the boundaries between faith and reason. Assent in Locke's sense varies in its degrees according to the grounds of probability and it is always less than knowledge. But there is 'one sort of propositions which challenges the highest degree of assurance, whether or not the thing proposed agrees or disagrees with common experience and the ordinary course of things.' These are the truths of revelation, the assurance of which is faith. While reason is the 'discovery of the certainty or probability of propositions by observation from ideas got by sensation or reflection,' faith is 'the assent to any proposition not thus made out, but upon the credit of the proposer as coming from God in some extraordinary manner.' Revelation can indeed give us no new simple ideas which we had not before by sensation or reflection; and though it may make us know propositions already known through reason it

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cannot be admitted against the clear evidence of reason. If this is true of direct revelation, still less can revealed truths be accepted merely on the authority of tradition, or of a book, unless reason convinces us that the book itself is inspired. But there are subjects which, not being contrary to reason, are above reason, and these if revealed are matters of faith to which we can give a full assurance, provided always that reason judges whether the revelation is such, and what the words mean in which it is contained. It follows that even when we can judge by our natural powers, 'an evident revelation should determine our assent even against probability.' In the case of miracles when properly attested their very strangeness makes them fitted to produce belief, when, Locke adds in significant words, 'they are suitable to ends aimed at by Him who has power to change the course of nature.'

This definition of the separate powers of faith and reason, according to which faith 'cannot be afforded to anything but upon good reason' and so cannot be opposite to it, and at the same time is described as an 'assent founded on the highest reason,' makes Locke at once a believer and a rationalist. All that he does in the *Essay* to elucidate his doctrine is to protest against what

he calls enthusiasm, what we should call fanaticism, upon which he added a chapter in the fourth edition, which admirably illustrates both his breadth and his cautious restraint. 'Revelation is natural reason enlarged,' but enthusiasm, which persuades itself of immediate intercourse with God, without help of reason, but 'from the conceits of a warmed or overweening brain,' pretending to an internal light, sins against the supreme arbitration of reason. It takes away reason to make way for revelation and puts out the light of both. 'For God (he adds in a well-known phrase) when He makes the prophet doth not unmake the man.'

But the real meaning of Locke's blending of faith and rationalism and of the credence which he attaches to miracles, is only adequately seen when we take into account his *Reasonableness of Christianity*, a book which, besides many tedious pages, contains some of Locke's finest work. Locke determined, he tells us, to put aside all works of divinity and endeavour to discover the message of the New Testament itself as it presented itself to a candid and unbiassed reader. The plainness of the doctrine made him surprised that everybody did not see and embrace it. Though at his first setting out he was ignorant where his search

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would conduct him, he was impressed by the 'wonderful harmony leading to the same points in all the parts of the sacred history of the Gospels.' Two things, and only two things, he found, besides belief in one God, are taught by Jesus and by His apostles as the condition of the new covenant: faith and repentance—believing Jesus to be the Messiah, and through this faith adopting a good life. This replaced the Mosaic law of works and the morality of the heathen. All else contained in the Scriptures beyond these fundamental articles, though truths and to be believed by one who knows them, a man may still be ignorant of and yet be saved, or may interpret differently from other men according to his lights. That there is one God, that Jesus is the Messiah, and that we must live a good life, are enough. The essential reasonableness of Christianity consisted, to Locke, therefore, in its declaration of God's unity, no longer restricted to one people but delivered to all mankind, and its bringing to righteousness through this faith weak men who cannot by reason attain to rules of morality. 'Natural religion in its full extent nowhere had been taken care of by the force of natural reason.' 'Nobody that I know before our Saviour's time ever did or went about to give us

a morality . . . which mankind might have recourse to as their unerring rule. Such a law of morality Jesus Christ hath given us in the New Testament, but by the latter of these ways, by revelation.'

It is plain, therefore, from the spirit of this work (as well as from the little posthumous *Discourse on Miracles*) that for Locke not only the belief in Christian revelation but in the miracles by which it was supported depended on the evidence which the revelation supplies of the 'ends aimed at by God.' 'The miracles are to be judged by the doctrine, not the doctrine by the miracles.'<sup>1</sup> Their significance to him lies not so much in their contrariety to ordinary events, as in the light they threw upon the divine nature, which could use them to enforce a system of morality, thoroughly acceptable to the human reason. Locke's profound belief in the concern which God has for His universe which He creates, and his willingness to base our theoretical conviction of God's existence on a precarious use of the conception of causality, leave as many questions unsolved as they solve. But at least they do not blur the problem by omitting one portion of the data

<sup>1</sup> From the *Journal* See Fox Bourne, vol 1 p. 464 (quoted by Fraser)

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The rationalism of Locke made him the parent of Deism, which neglected the faith which he combined with his rationalism. In the controversy over the question whether natural or rational religion could be reconciled with Christianity as a revealed religion supported by miracles, the Deists were those who upheld natural religion and directly and indirectly, with irony more or less concealed, depreciated Christianity. The latitude practised by the orthodox writers made them not always or easily distinguishable from the Deists, one of whom indeed claimed Archbishop Tillotson as the source of Deism. It is not strange, therefore, that though Locke must be reckoned on the side of the orthodox, the Deists should have derived their inspiration from him. The circumstances have been related which brought Locke into conflict with Stillingfleet. Toland's argument to show that the Gospels contained nothing 'above reason' was based by him on Locke's *Essay* and repudiated by Locke. Collins who had been an ardent pupil of Locke wrote in his *Discourse of Free-thinking* one of the deistical books which excited the liveliest controversy. The deistical doctrine passed through various phases in England during the first half of the eighteenth century and then died out. But it left its traces in two minds of the first

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order. In England it led to Hume's *Essay on Miracles* and his *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*. Abroad it led to the deism of Voltaire, who left England in 1728 to become the missionary in Europe of the philosophy of Newton and Locke. Hume and Voltaire represent (not in religion only) the disintegrating and sceptical tendency, which was one, but only one element in Locke's philosophy. A new construction followed in the latter part of the century, first in Rousseau and then in Kant.

## BOOKS WHICH MAY BE CONSULTED

Cheap Editions of the *Essay*, the *Treatises of Government*, and some others of Locke's writings may be obtained. There is a collected edition of Locke's works, now out of print, but to be found in most libraries.

- A. CAMPBELL FRASER. *Locke* (Blackwood's Philosophical Classics.) Edinburgh, 1890.
- *Locke's Essay* Clarendon Press, 1894.
- John Locke as a factor in Modern Thought. (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1903-4)
- H. HOFFDING. *History of Philosophy*, vol. I. Chapter on Locke London, 1900
- R. ADAMSON *Development of Modern Philosophy*, vol. I Chapter on Locke. Edinburgh, 1903.
- T. H. GREEN. Introduction to Hume's *Treatise*. (Green's *Works*, vol. I, London, 1885, or Green and Grose's edition of Hume's *Treatise*, vol. I., London, 1874)
- T. WEBB *The Intellectualism of Locke*. Dublin, 1857.
- T. FOWLER. *Locke*. London, 1880
- H. SIDGWICK. *History of Ethics* London, 1886.
- SIR L. STEPHEN *History of English Thought in Eighteenth Century*. ('Deism' in vol. I.; 'Political Theories,' vol. II) London, 1876.
- D. G. RITCHIE. *Natural Rights*. London, 1895.
- CH. BASTIDE. *John Locke. ses Théories politiques*. Paris, 1906.
- SIR F. POLLOCK. Locke's Theory of the State. (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1903-4.)
- LORD KING *The Life of John Locke, with Extracts from his Correspondence, Journals, and Common-place Books* London, 1829.
- H. R. FOX BOURNE. *The Life of John Locke*. London, 1876



Printed by T and A CONSTABLE, Printers to His Majesty  
at the Edinburgh University Press